

FONDAZIONE PRADA PRESENTS THE EXHIBITION "K" FEATURING MARTIN KIPPENBERGER'S *THE HAPPY END OF FRANZ KAFKA'S 'AMERIKA'* ACCOMPANIED BY ORSON WELLES' FILM *THE TRIAL* AND TANGERINE DREAM'S ALBUM *THE CASTLE*, IN MILAN

Fondazione Prada presents the exhibition "K" in its Milan venue from 21 February to 25 October 2020. This project, featuring Martin Kippenberger's legendary artwork *The Happy End of Franz Kafka's "Amerika"* accompanied by Orson Welles' iconic film *The Trial* and Tangerine Dream's late electronic album *The Castle*, is conceived by Udo Kittelmann as a coexisting trilogy.

"K" is inspired by three uncompleted and seminal novels by Franz Kafka (1883-1924)—*Amerika* (America), *Der Prozess* (The Trial), and *Das Schloss* (The Castle)—posthumously published from 1925 to 1927. The unfinished nature of these books allows multiple and open readings and their adaptation into an exhibition project by visual artist Martin Kippenberger, film director Orson Welles, and electronic music band Tangerine Dream, who explored the novels' subjects and atmospheres through allusions and interpretations. Visitors will be invited to experience three possible creative encounters with Kafka's oeuvre through a simultaneous presentation of art, cinema and music works, respectively in the Podium, Cinema and Cisterna. "K" proves Fondazione Prada's intention to cross the boundaries of contemporary art and embrace a vast cultural sphere, that also comprises historical perspectives and interests in other languages, such as cinema, music, literature and their possible interconnections and exchanges.

As underlined by Udo Kittelmann, "*Amerika*, *The Trial*, and *The Castle* form a 'trilogy of loneliness,' according to Kafka's executor Max Brod. Seen in this light, we may also view 'K' as a triptych, an exhibition that resembles a tripartite, triple-layered picture. The structure is therefore similar to that of a traditional altarpiece, with *Amerika* occupying the large central panel and *The Trial* and *The Castle* the side panels. The three parts can be read together as a remarkable allegory of the vicissitudes of life, or, in Kafka's words: 'All these parables really set out to say merely that the incomprehensible is incomprehensible, and we know that already.'"

***The Happy End of Franz Kafka's "Amerika"*, an artwork by Martin Kippenberger**

At the heart of "K" lies Martin Kippenberger's installation *The Happy End of Franz Kafka's "Amerika"* (1994), on view at the ground floor of Podium and never exhibited in Italy before. Based on the novel *Amerika* published in 1927, the work re-imagines a section of the book when the protagonist Karl Rossmann, having travelled across America, applies for a job at the "biggest theatre in the world". German artist Martin Kippenberger (1953-1997) explored the fictional utopia of universal employment, adapting Kafka's idea of communal job

interviews into an extensive artwork.

According to German scholar Wilhelm Emrich *America* is “one of the most clear-sighted poetic exposures of modern industrial society that exist in world literature. In it the hidden economic and psychological mechanism of this society and its satanic consequences are mercilessly laid bare.” The young immigrant Karl Rossmann, *America*’s protagonist in search of professional success, empathy and sense of justice, deals with a world of exploitation, competition, and dehumanization, far from the ideal representation of USA as a “land of opportunity” and “land of the free”.

Kafka never completed the novel, which he abandoned writing over ten years before it was posthumously published in 1927, and Kippenberger claimed that he never finished reading it, hearing the story second-hand from a friend. The unfinished condition of the book leaves open the possibility, unusual in Kafka’s fiction, for a “happy ending”. Kippenberger described *The Happy End of Franz Kafka’s “Amerika”* as “a circus in town, looking to employ reliable hands, helpers, doers, self-confident handlers and the like. Outside the circus tent, in my imagination, there would be tables and chairs set up for job interviews”, adding that “viewers are supposed to imagine the conversations that might be taking place at the tables”. The installation gathers a vast array of objects and furniture, such as several tables and vintage design or flea market chairs and elements from previous Kippenberger’s exhibitions, in order to stage a soccer field for conducting mass interviews. This extremely complex artwork, exhibited for the first time at Museum Boijmans van Beuningen in Rotterdam in 1994, may refer to the competition between artists and the art community’s dynamics, but also reflects the artist’s belief in the importance of relationships and dialogues suggested by its interview format.

***The Trial*, a film by Orson Welles**

The second element of the trilogy is Orson Welles’ film *The Trial* (1962) based on Kafka’s book of the same title and to be screened at Fondazione Prada’s Cinema. Orson Welles (1915-1985) wrote and realized a dream-logic black comedy drama movie, considered by the critics as one of his masterpieces for its scenic design and cinematography. Anthony Perkins stars as Josef K., a bureaucrat who is accused of a never-specified crime. Jeanne Moreau, Romy Schneider, and Elsa Martinelli play female characters, who are involved in various ways in Josef’s trial and life. The director plays the Advocate, Josef’s lawyer and the film’s principal antagonist.

The combination of Kafka and Welles was defined by film critics as an “alliance of shockers.” The critical reception of Welles’ film was extremely mixed. When the film premiered in Germany in 1963, the journalist Karl Korn wrote: “The most convincing demonstration of Orson Welles’ congenial grasp of Kafka is that he distances himself

from all the mistakes made in Kafka's literature. The film is an arsenal of images that rises above the folly of all the theses put forth in the secondary literature. It can be understood and grasped purely through its imagery."

***Franz Kafka The Castle*, an album by Tangerine Dream**

"K" is completed by Tangerine Dream's album *Franz Kafka The Castle* (2013) to be played on a loop in the Cisterna. This enclosed exhibition space will be transformed in an evocative and comfortable environment, where visitors can hang out and listen to the music by the German electronic music band founded by Edgar Froese (1944-2015) in 1967.

Franz Kafka's *The Castle* is the story of K, who claims to be a Land Surveyor, who arrives to a village, dominated by a mysterious fortress. All his attempt to practice his profession and to speak with his supposed employer at the castle are doomed to fail. The reader is forced into confrontation with a series of frustrations and, in particular, with K's futile struggle for recognition and respect and a never-ending journey described by Kafka as the "world history of your soul."

The album consists of ten tracks, eight of them composed by Edgar Froese, one by Thorsten Quaeschning, and one by both. In the four-page booklet each title is introduced by short "imaginary descriptions", taken from Kafka's diary. In his final extensive note Edgar Froese states: "Although Kafka wasn't able to finish his last work, *The Castle*, he didn't need to; he has said everything that needed saying... It's impossible to transform *The Castle* into music. That's why it will never be more than an incomplete and abortive attempt. If we fail, then at least the risk is worth applause." According to Udo Kittelmann, Tangerine Dream transformed *The Castle* "into a deeply emotional, machine-controlled electronic composition that comes far closer to the life of the soul, to all that is magical and cosmic in our lives than what is commonly displayed by our everyday world with its contradictory promises of reality—that is quite a bold and courageous undertaking."

"K", a volume edited by Udo Kittelmann and published by Fondazione Prada

"K" is accompanied by an extensive publication edited by Udo Kittelmann, which, along with texts and interviews by the three artists, features selected excerpts from Kafka's novels and diaries, and critical essays and notes by authors Massimo Cacciari, Paola Capriolo, Michael Hofmann, Susanne Kippenberger, Udo Kittelmann, Primo Levi, Thomas Martinec, and Ayad B. Rahmani. These contributions analyze significant aspects concerning the exhibition, such as places of work, law and rules, the immensity and remoteness of power structures, music and language, and the difficulty and value of translation as a means of communication and instrument of cultural production.

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